

“I FOUND A DEAD BIRD” COMMUNICATION

I found a dead bird, now what do I do?

Wild birds die for a variety of reasons and most wild bird deaths have no impact on human health.

- a) Natural Death – naturally short life span, severe weather, predators, competition between species.
- b) Accidental – impacts with power lines, vehicle collisions, aircraft strikes, impacts with windows or buildings.
- c) Toxicants –
 - 1. Legal pest control – three EPA/OISC registered pesticides are used to manage pest pigeon, starling, or House sparrow problems in Indiana. The legal application of these products presents no threat to human health and safety.
 - 2. Illegal or accidental pesticide exposure – sometimes people apply other pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, etc.) incorrectly or the birds enter a recently treated area before the designated safe re-entry time has passed.
 - 3. Environmental contamination – chemical or other contaminate spills, leaks, or releases.
 - 4. Spoiled grain crop residues – Crop residues are a primary food source for many of our wild birds. Bacteria, fungi, and molds can grow on crop residues left in the field and some of these organisms can cause mortality.
 - 5. Dirty bird feeders – the same organisms found in spoiled crop residues can also be found in backyard bird feeders if they are not kept clean.

d) Disease – most wild bird diseases present no threat to human health. However, there are two wild bird-related diseases about which Hoosiers are most worried.

- 1. **West Nile Virus** – Wild birds serve as an amplifying host for West Nile virus. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on infected birds and then biting humans. Wild birds are also killed by the West Nile virus. **Blue jays, robins, cardinals, crows, and raptors (falcons, hawks, and owls)** are highly sensitive to the virus, and therefore are the best indicators of West Nile virus activity in a community. They are the only species of birds that the Indiana State Department of Health Laboratory is testing for the virus. If you find a dead blue jay, robin, cardinal, crow, falcon, owl, or hawk during mosquito season (May – October), please call your local health department (http://www.in.gov/isdh/links/local_dep/index.htm) and ask them if they would like to pick it up and send it to the State Laboratory.

2. **Highly Pathogenic Asian H5N1 (HPAI)**, commonly known as Avian Influenza or bird flu is a disease that concerns many people. Avian Influenza (AI) occurs in North America naturally in a form that does not infect humans (Low Path AI, or LPAI). The disease that has affected humans in other countries, **HPAI**, is not currently found in North America. In the worldwide wild bird population, AI is most often found in waterbirds, such as waterfowl (geese, ducks, swans) and shorebirds (sandpiper-type birds). However, there are no documented cases of the disease ever being transmitted to humans from wild birds. Wild, migrating birds may provide one possible route of entry for **HPAI** into North America. If the disease is spread by wild birds, the first evidence of **HPAI** in North America would be expected to be found in Alaska due to its proximity to the natural Asian wild bird migration paths. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources has joined forces with USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in a state/federal partnership to initiate a pro-active wild waterfowl surveillance program. This will establish an early warning system for any evidence of **HPAI** in our migratory waterfowl. Wildlife Biologists from IDNR and Wildlife Services will be handling all sampling and monitoring activities for **HPAI** in Indiana. Since our resident geese and ducks do not migrate a significant distance, those waterfowl are not at risk for initial exposure to **HPAI** and are not a priority in the surveillance program. If you find dead migratory geese, ducks, swans, or shorebirds, **DO NOT PICK UP THE BIRDS FOR TESTING**. Please call the Wildlife Conflicts Information Hotline at 1:800:893-4116 to report the location and number of dead waterfowl. IDNR and Wildlife Services professional staff will determine if testing is necessary.

Dead wild birds should not be handled with bare hands. If you do need to dispose of a dead bird, use gloves or a plastic bag turned inside out over your hand to pick up the bird, double bag it, and either bury it or dispose of it in the trash.